

BAZ POEMS

KEVIN CADWALLENDER



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by KEVIN CADWALLENDER

BAZ THE YOUNGER GOES TO WAR

BAZ LEX TALIO NIS

BAZ WEPT

BAZ STIRRING UP THE D.N.A.

BAZ AND THE FASCISTS

BAZ, CHER CHEZ LA FEMME

BAZ AND THE INTENTIONAL FALLACY

BAZ AND THE BOURGEOISIE

BAZ GOES DUTCH

BAZ APPRECIATES ART

BAZ VIRGO NIL INTACTUS

*BAZ INTERFERES WITH THE MEANS OF
PRODUCTION*

BAZ TARDY

BAZ AND THE MANTLE OF FIDELITY

BAZ AND THE RAM RAIDERS

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INTRODUCTION

BROWN ALE AND THE BIRDY SONG

Notes on the 'Baz' poems of Kevin Cadwallender.

It's a pleasure to be asked to introduce a collection of Kevin Cadwallender's 'Baz' poems. I published a group of them in a recent number of 'The Echo Room' and was impressed by their vitality and the poet's wry but compassionate humour. As a complete sequence the poems bleed into each other and have a forceful aggregate effect. They are misleadingly simple poems, concealing their true craftsmanship, entertaining work which never cheapens itself intellectually in the process of its creation.

Throughout, the poet distinguishes himself from his creation, Baz, by a display of intelligence and sensitivity that is never patronising. Baz may be a rogue but he engages our sympathy, arouses our compassion and in the poet's case invokes a sense of loss for a childhood world where issues of Class and Ideology had still yet to matter.

As we follow Baz on his riotous adventures Cadwallender subtly explores the contemporary popular culture that has shaped Baz's existence, that has imposed upon Baz his 'victim' status. These poems are firmly rooted in the world of Brown Ale and The Birdy Song, in the world of gratuitous sex and fantasy, the ignorance of Sexism, the world of over-indulgent boozing and pent-up violence. Cadwallender explores the damaging effects of the dominant ideology of Consumer Capitalism in an honest and gritty portrayal of the culture's underbelly. We constantly get the sense that 'Baz' and millions like him have been dispassionately sold short by the system, that Baz is a product of a culture which in spite of surface glitter promises far more salvation than it delivers. Baz is alienated from his own language, is a self-acclaimed Philistine but is still a struggling soul who should never be ignored. Thankfully his rebellious spirit is celebrated in the excellent 'Baz and the bourgeoisie' where he confronts the smug upwardly mobile coach lamp owners with admirable and chaotic fervour.

Cadwallender's language is immediate and strikingly true to life. This sequence should be recognised as a considerable achievement since it heartfully endorses the idea that poetry can explore aspects of popular culture in a thought provoking, humorous and engaging manner.

The Birdy Song and Brown Ale, drunken sexual conquest and Philistine dogma are rooted in our everyday lives. Cadwallender, with sensitivity and perception shows how vital and important it is to address this subject area in these dark times of manifold disdain.

Read on and enjoy.

BRENDAN CLEARY
THE ECHO ROOM
MARCH '93

BAZ THE YOUNGER GOES TO WAR

Lining up soldiers
behind lego buildings
in Baz's Mam's bathroom.

We would recreate
unspecified carnage,
with an aerial bombardment
of glass alleys.
Both sides countenancing
massive losses without
hope of surrender.

One fateful Sunday
With a Steel ball bearing
as big as a tennis ball
Baz brought the ultimate
deterrent to bear,
and with the shattering
of plastic buildings
and plastic men
came the sickening
crack of bone.

In hospital
Baz marvelled
at the resilience
of flesh,
accepting my
surrender
with gracious
ease.

BAZ LEX TALIO NIS

Bullied once too often
In the Juniors,
and dreading the
final bell.

On the long walk home
not daring to look back,
Leering voices scuffling
at my haversack straps.

Yells and commotion
cry-baby calls
mocking my misery.
and cowards yellow
making my guts ache.

Turning to face
my own fear,
and seeing Baz
dervishing his
towel bag into
the enemy ranks.
I charged and
we routed them
all.

Baz grinning
like a maniac,
at my mute appreciation
walked to my house
saluted and marched
off.

Stopping only once
to empty the brick
from his towelbag.

BAZ WEPT

An empty rabbit hutch
and the smell of baking,
brought home the transience
of life and the foolishness
of getting involved.

Still, Baz and me
buried the pie in
a next door neighbour's
garden.

Fingerprints in flour
and soil beneath our nails
giving us away to our
Father's leather belts.

Yet it was worth
the pain, striking
a final blow for innocence.

BAZ STIRRING UP THE D.N.A.

Once in the biology lab
Confronted by XX and XY
and a teacher keen
on sexual equations.

Baz at a loss
for answers gassed
the school hamster
with a blown out
bunsen burner.

"What kind of moron are you?"
asked Mr. Chapman.

It was the first time
I ever saw a teacher bleed.

Mr. Harrison it seems
used to be an amateur boxer
before he became a lab technician.

Baz says
that corporal punishment
is a waste of time
and he should know
his brother was
once birched
on a day trip
to the
Isle of Man.

BAZ AND THE FASCISTS

When Baz stopped bed wetting
and invited us up to the musty
fantasies of his secret passion,
It was like 'Joplings' window gone mad.
Mannequins kitted out with Nazi regalia,
a primitive arsenal of knives
and crossbows and rice-flails.
Like part of his childhood
got fucked up by the bastard brood
of Bruce Lee and Eva Braun.

One day pissed in Sunderland High Street,
Confronted by some National Front skin
with a copy of 'Bulldog' waving like a flag,
Baz took off his 'dut'
and with rhino-like accuracy
Head-butted him to the ground,

and it was poppy day all over the place

"That's for me Grandad," Baz muttered
moving off in search of new lethal weapons.

BAZ, CHER CHEZ LA FEMME

Baz has an idea
first one this decade,
let's go to Blackpool
Do the lights
Do Yates Wine Lodge
howk up from the
top of the tower,
Buy some booze
from the off door.

Drinking cheap vodka
in cheap bed sits
Baz pisses the bed drunk
Smuggles out sheets
after greasy breakfast
dumps them in a bottle bank.

At the disco
Baz smooth as diarrhoea
sidles up to his intended
a grope itching in his groin,
"Do yer wanna dance?"
he says, cool as owl.
"I already am"
She smiles.

Years of rehearsed
sophistication
are shot to buggery,
as he opens his gob,

"Go fuck yourself then!"

Baz lurches back to the bar
orders something poisonous,
leaves the dancefloor
to more sensitive souls.

BAZ AND THE INTENTIONAL FALLACY

Baz bruises easy
lovebites like gobstoppers
pearling his neck.
Grinning like he
ate a cheshire cat
and I know we're
gonna get the whole
gristy affair with
sordid colour supplements
for the next three weeks
and nobody dares suggest
what we're all thinking
as he swaggers back to the bar.

Cos Baz is hard
I know, he sez so
and so do his tattoos
and as he always says
before he drops you
on the one hand there's
L.O.V.E.
and on the other there is

BAZ AND THE BOURGEOISIE

In her lounge, like she didn't have a living room
and Baz rattling on about how he never scabbed
and me feeling guilty for not being a miner
and the cut glass crystal decanter getting
more and more offensive
and the brass pit lamps were
just as stuck up as her gobshite
of a husband
who droned on and on about insurance
and his shares in British Gas
and how his 'Procol Harum' L.P.'s
were so bastard rare that it didn't
matter if they were crap or not.

And me being polite as usual
and nodding in all the right places
and Baz wanking the West Highland White
under the table with his boot
and me bolting Mousakka
and Bulls Blood and tryin' not
to look down the low cut dress
of our gracious hostess,
who says she and her husband
have an 'Open relationship'
from the 'Open university'
and I'm thinking, "I want out"
and Baz reckons he's scored
and comes up grinning from under
the table like some perverse
synchronised swimmer.

and I can't find the car keys
and the Husband is showing me
his 'Airfix' kits and trying
to put his hand on me bum.
and Baz I can tell
is shagging noisily
like a bollock in a china shop,
the crystal decanter
giggling nervously.

and I'm out of there
Baz trailing, cursing
falling over his libido

as it pulls its 'kecks' up.

Halfway home

Baz eyes me suspiciously.

"You're a real wanker sometimes!"

and reluctantly I have to agree.

BAZ GOES DUTCH

Double

Dutch

in Holland.

Baz grasps

the fact

that his

vocabulary

does not extend

beyond its Northern

confines.

Gazes out of

the window

at dutch swans

in dutch canals

muttering.

"Look at all these

fuckin' fjords!"

BAZ APPRECIATES ART

Half-cut and looking for the final cut,
In a Hamburg 'Cunsthalle'
with crude jokes and
Baz looking for the bog
that Rodin pissed in.
Insights as profound
as blurb on beermats
bubble out:
"I always liked the Mona Lisa myself,
I read in 'Viz' once she had a canny arse."

Meanwhile in another world
Da Vinci paints 'The tart with the fat backside'
as drunks peruse and yearn
for that uncanny smile.

BAZ VIRGO NIL INTACTUS

Ten pints of brown ale
and she not far behind
down the back of
the 'Workies' club
with the urine on bricks
and stale cigarettes
he loses it
after a couple of sly grunts
and her tights
unceremoniously wrinkled
to the dull thud
of 'The Birdy Song'
and if either one
remembers
it'll be a miracle
or because
she forgot her pill
like he forgets her name

BAZ INTERFERES WITH THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Having had one too many
at the Eyesenck Oyster Bar,
Baz in furtive mood
Smooches to Marx
In the flickering
T.V. Light.
Wet dreams his way
through Rosa and several other
revolutionary role models
before his appetite is
sated like Stalinism
In a curry sauce of anarchy
Kriptonin and Bakunin
dance without leading
into Images of young men
in classrooms of class
where Durkheim was found
beaten into
a state of anomie
which led to erotic
dreams and sticky
hands interfering
with various
means of production

And the posters were mute
Che and Vlad hiding in
incomprehensible
iconography.

BAZ TARDY

Some twelve or
fourteen moonshines
lag of a brother.
Baz can still drink
most legitimate boozers
under the table.

and in the plague of
customs and excise
Baz would never permit
the curiosity of nations
or their representatives
to deprive him of his
booty.
When the dimensions
of a suitcase are
as well compacted
with
Cigarettes for Mam
and Rum for Dad,
as a souvenir
donkey.

Clinking
through customs
brazen as necessity,
with gods standing
up and cheering
for bastards.

BAZ AND THE MANTLE OF FIDELITY

Baz met Julie
At a party
she was licking
jam from his navel,
when he knew
it was love.

And her tongue
keeps him in place
to this day.

Happy watching
his tattoos
turn to fat,
gripping her
hand with his
little band
of gold,
clinking
on his bitter.

Baz goes by
his Sunday name
these days,
works as a
labourer.

Julie works
at the shirt factory,
gets reject shirts
for Christmas presents.

Baz loves Julie
and Julie loves Baz
it says so
on the sun visor
of their Ford Cortina.

BAZ AND THE RAM RAIDERS

So anyway I'll tell yer
this is how it is,
We hot wired this Escort,
no rubbish mind we only 'Twoc' G.T.'s,
So anyway we took it to the town,
Ram raided the job centre
Not a fucking job on the premises
came out with half a dozen E.T. schemes
and some crap tapes of lift music.
Can't get rid of the E.T. schemes,
Sold the tapes to me Granny,
She's over the moon,
thinks it's James Last.

Got nicked last week
drivin' with no insurance,
no taz, no M.O.T..... no car,
Bastard surrealist coppers.

So anyway she sez
Yorra sexist pig, yer never take me anywhere,
Sez she's not gonna see me again unless I change...
Bought some Reeboks and
a new pair of Levi's
Can't say I haven't tried.

Tell yer what to do
to stop them petrol bombs,
put the price of petrol up,
didn't see half the violence,
durin' the gulf war.

How man you've never seen nowt like it,
it was bliddy great man
hundreds, na thousands of us
rampaging through the city,
Pouring over the Tyne Bridge,
It was like a revolution man.
I, a do the Great North run
every year.
Why it keeps us off the streets.

KEVIN CADWALLENDER

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